

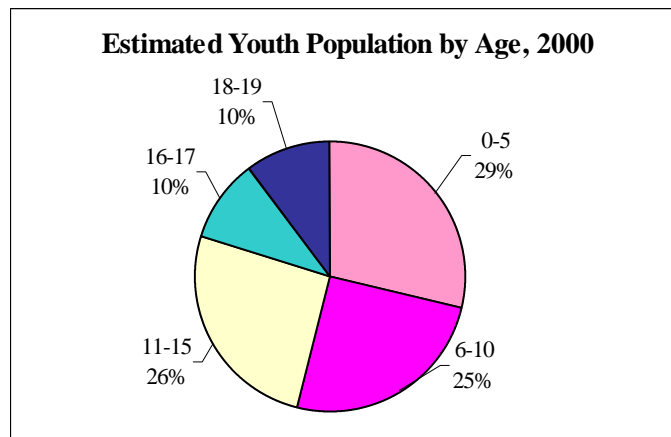
# **CHARACTERISTICS OF MASSACHUSETTS' JUVENILE POPULATION**

## MASSACHUSETTS' JUVENILE POPULATION

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According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Massachusetts year 2000 estimated population is 6,200,000, ranking 13<sup>th</sup> in population size compared to the other 49 states. Furthermore, the 2000 census estimates youth age 19 years and under represent 27 percent of the total population in Massachusetts. Specifically, youth ages 11 to 15 comprise 26 percent of the youth population, youth ages 16 to 17 represent 10 percent of youth, and youth ages 18 to 19 encompass an additional 10 percent of the youth population. Youth under the age of 11 represent 54 percent of the youth population in Massachusetts.

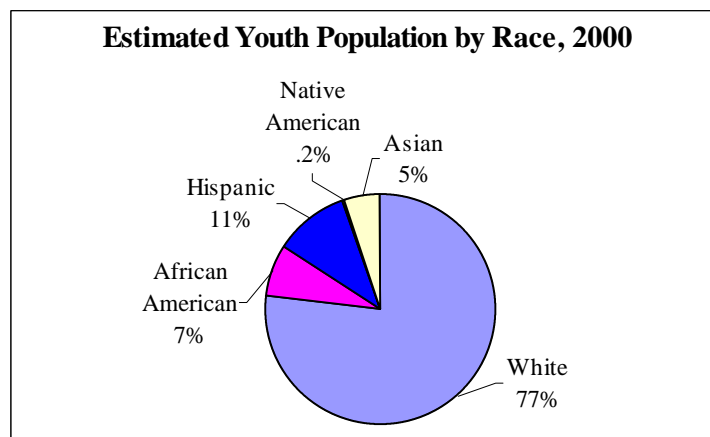
**Figure 1-1.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

According to the 2000 Census Bureau estimates, youth ages 19 years and under are comprised of 51 percent males and 49 percent females. The racial composition of Massachusetts' youth is 76.8 percent white, 7.3 percent African-American, 10.3 percent Hispanic, 5 percent Asian, and .2 percent Native American.

**Figure 1-2.**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000

The Census Bureau approximates that by 2002, the population of youth aged 17 years and under will increase by 5 percent over the 1995 estimate, representing an increase of almost 70,000 youth. The Census Bureau further estimates the Massachusetts population of young people between 14 and 17 years old will increase 30 percent by 2005, as compared to 1995 estimates, representing an increase of approximately 87,000 youth. The population of children impacts the demand for schools and health care, in addition to, social services and amenities that deal with children and their families.

## EDUCATION

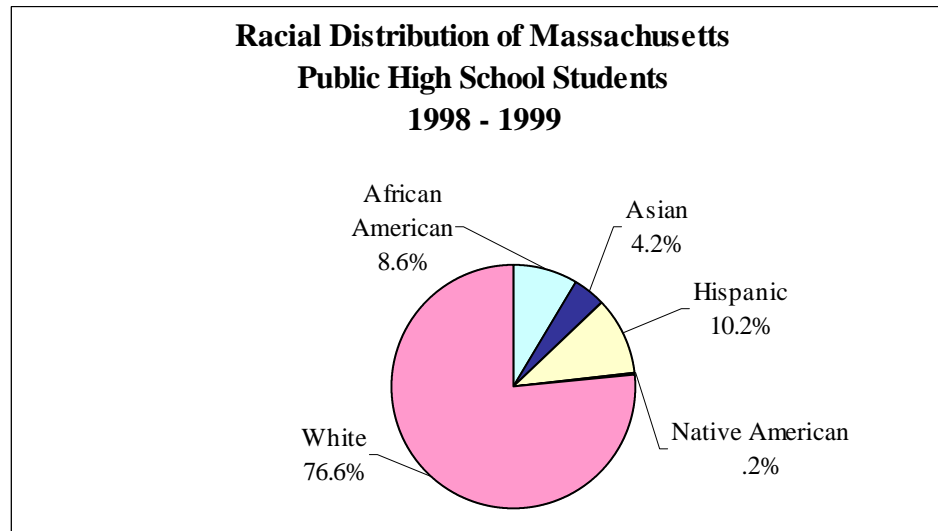
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The Massachusetts Department of Education (2000) reports the total high school student (grades 9-12) enrollment for the 1998-1999 school year was 258,026 youth.

### ***Racial Distribution***

Remaining consistent with the prior school year, the racial distribution of all public school students during the 1998-1999 school year was: 76.6 percent white, 10.2 percent Hispanic, 8.6 percent African American, 4.2 percent Asian, and .2 percent Native American. Comparing these data to the 1995 Census Bureau population estimates demonstrates that the racial distribution of students enrolled in public schools is very similar to the racial makeup of Massachusetts youth ages 0 – 17 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-3.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

### ***School Dropouts***

The Massachusetts Department of Education defines a dropout “as a student in grade nine through twelve who leaves school prior to graduation for reasons other than transfer to another school, and does not re-enroll before the following October 1” (1999, p. 1). A number of risk factors have been identified as contributing to school dropout rates. These include, lack of commitment to school and one’s role as a student, the *experience* of academic failure, and aggressive or impulsive behavior in the early primary grades. One or more of these factors may enhance a student’s likelihood of leaving school prior to graduating (Snyder & Sickmund, 1995).

The Massachusetts Department of Education (2000) reports from 1993 to 1999, dropout rates in Massachusetts’ public schools have remained fairly constant. During the 1999 school year, a total of 9,188 ninth-through-twelfth-graders dropped out of Massachusetts public schools, representing 3.6 percent of the 258,026 students enrolled in grades nine through twelve.

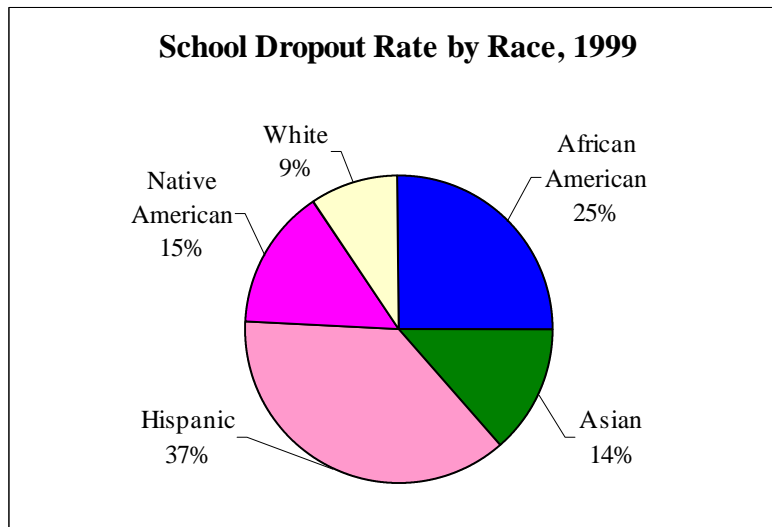
**Table 1-1. School Dropout Rates, 1993 – 1999**

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number of Student Dropouts	7,975	8,512	8,396	8,177	8,453	8,582	9,188
Percentage of Total Students	3.5	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Dropout rates have varied generally by race/ethnicity. In 1999, the highest dropout rate was seen among the Hispanic youth population, and the lowest dropout rate was seen among white youth. The Hispanic dropout rate significantly increased to 9.8 percent in 1999 from 8.2 percent in 1998. Although the dropout rate also increased for other minority groups, it was not as extreme. The rate for African American students increased from 6.1 percent in 1998 to 6.7 percent in 1999, and the rate for Asian American youth increased to 3.6 percent from 3.5 percent. The dropout rate for white students slightly decreased to 2.5 percent from 2.6 percent. Of the students representing the 3.6 percent who dropout, over one-third are Hispanic (37%), compared to 1-out-of-10 who are white. (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-4.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Also in 1999, the dropout rate for males was higher (4.0 percent) than the female rate (3.1 percent), and has remained consistently higher over the past several years. For grades 9 through 12, 11<sup>th</sup> grade students had the highest rate of dropouts during the past seven years, averaging 4.1 percent.

**Table 1-2. School Dropout Rates by Grade, 1993 – 1999**

Grade Level	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Grade 9	3.2%	2.9%	3.1%	2.8%	2.8%	2.7%	3.1%
Grade 10	3.8%	4.2%	3.7%	3.7%	3.8%	3.6%	3.8%
Grade 11	4.0%	4.4%	4.5%	3.9%	4.0%	4.2%	4.3%
Grade 12	3.0%	3.3%	3.1%	3.3%	3.2%	3.3%	3.1%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

### ***School Exclusions***

The Massachusetts Department of Education defines student exclusion as "the removal of a student from regular school activities for disciplinary reasons permanently, indefinitely, or for more than ten consecutive days" (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000, p. 1). The number of student exclusions that occurred during the 1998-1999 school year represented a five-year low. Massachusetts' student exclusions remained consistent from 1995-1997, declined 11 percent in 1998, and decreased less than one percent in 1999 from the prior school year.

**Table 1-3. Number of Student School Exclusions, 1995 – 1999**

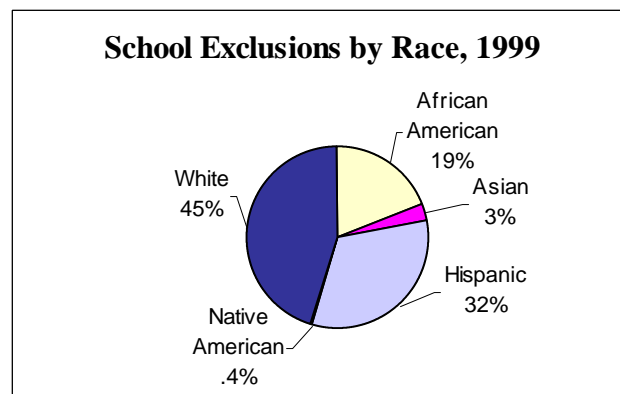
Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Number of Student Exclusions	1,485	1,482	1,498	1,334	1,326

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

During the 1998-1999 school year, 83 percent of the excluded students were male and 17 percent were female. A total of 26 students were excluded more than once during the 1998-1999 school year, representing a 10 percent decrease from the previous year, and a 47 percent decrease from 1996-1997 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

The racial distribution of the excluded students for the 1998-1999 school year was 0.8 percent Native American, 3 percent Asian, 19 percent African American, 32 percent Hispanic and 45 percent white. In comparison to the total student enrollment, African-American, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American students are disproportionately excluded from school. While minority youth comprised 23 percent of the total student population, they accounted for over half (55%) of student exclusions. Hispanic students represented the highest minority exclusion rate. Although comprising nearly one-tenth of the total student enrollment, Hispanic students accounted for almost one-third of student exclusions. Whereas, Caucasian students comprised 77 percent of the total student population, they accounted for 45 percent of student exclusions (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-5.**

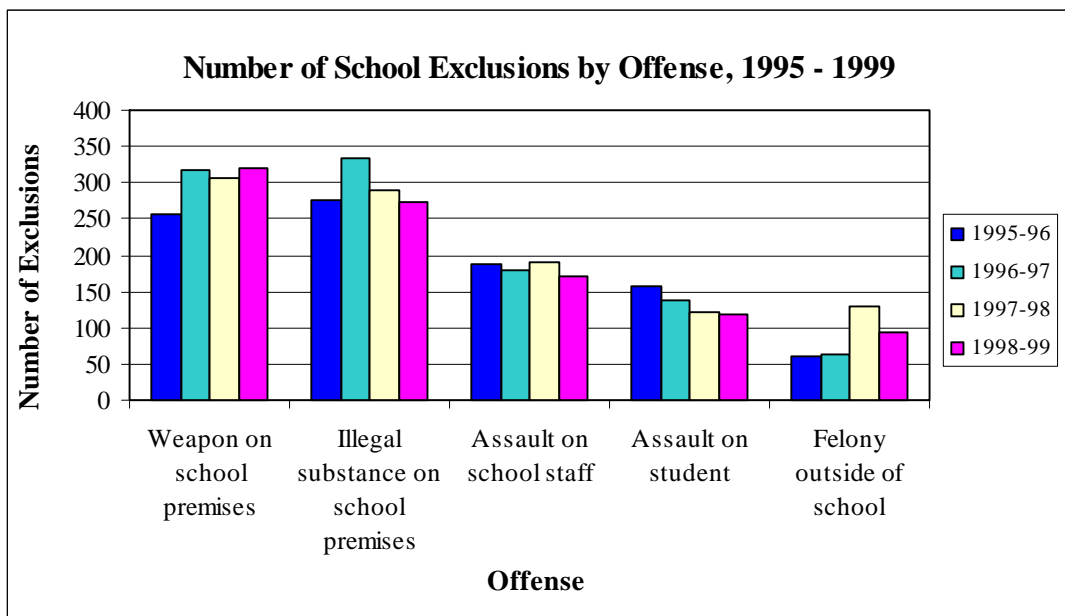


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

According to the Department of Education (2000) the main causes of school exclusion were: weapons possession (24%), possession of illegal substances on school premises (21%), assault

on staff (13%), and assault on students (9%). The 1998-1999 school year saw 319 exclusions for weapons possession on school premises, a 4 percent increase from the previous school year. The 1998-1999 school year also witnessed 273 exclusions for illegal substances on school premises, a 6 percent decrease from the previous year. During the 1998-1999 school year, 171 students were excluded for assaulting school staff, and 118 students for assaulting other students, a decrease of 10 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

**Figure 1-6.**

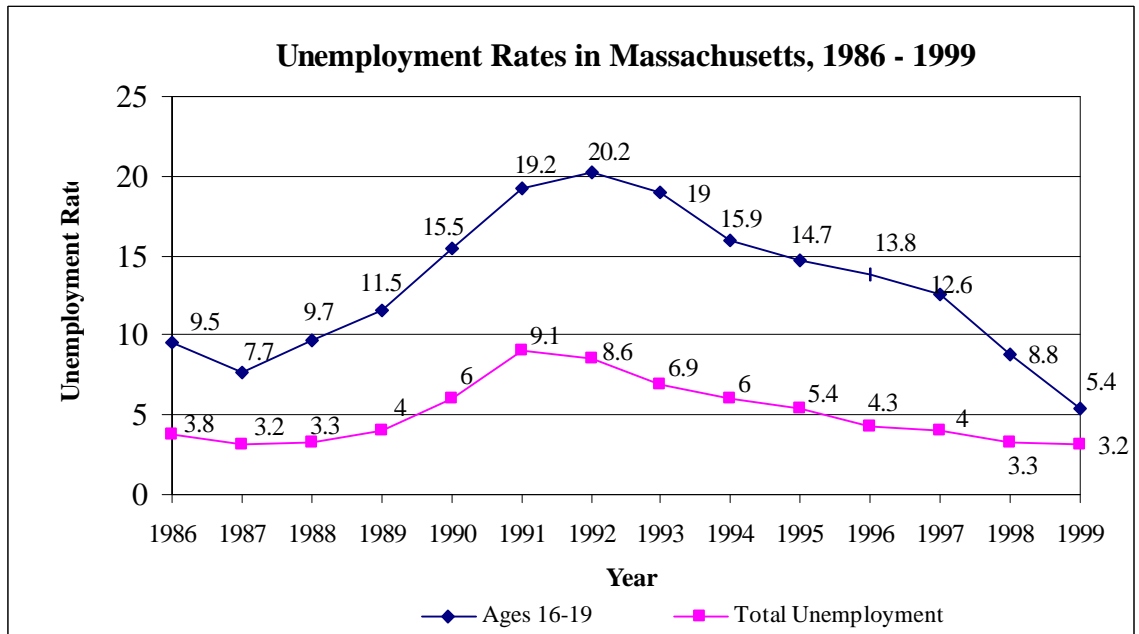


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

## UNEMPLOYMENT

Following the national trend, Massachusetts' unemployment rate for both adults and juveniles continues to steadily decline. The unemployment rate for youth, ages 16-19, declined 39% from its 13-year high in 1992, to the 1999 rate of 5.4. Also in 1999, the Massachusetts unemployment rate for youth was over one and one half times the Commonwealth's adult unemployment rate (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000).

**Figure 1-7.**



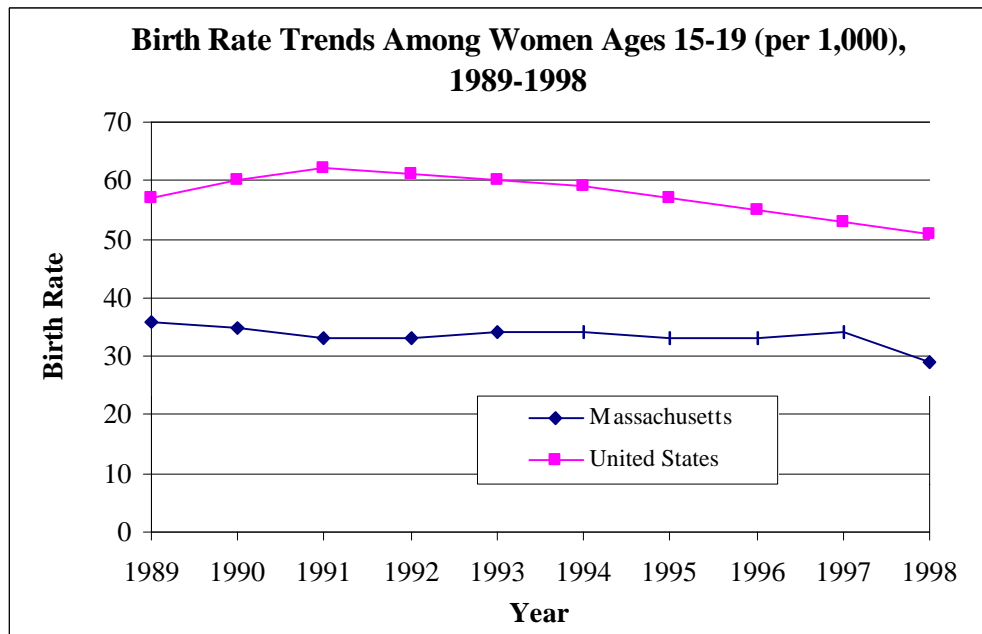
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1999

## TEEN PREGNANCY

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, every year, more than 900,000 American young women aged 15-19 become pregnant, and approximately 190,000 teens aged 17 and younger currently have children (1999). On average, young mothers are poor, and babies born to teenage mothers often have low birth weight and disproportionately high mortality. Approximately 80% of the children born to unmarried teenagers who dropped out of high school are poor. In contrast, just 8 percent of children born to married high school graduates aged 20 or older are poor. After gradually increasing from 1987 to 1991, the United States birth rate for young women aged 15-19 declined in 1998 for the seventh straight year. Recent declines in both birth and abortion rates indicate that teen pregnancy rates are continuing to decrease (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). The year 1999 concluded with a record low U.S. birth rate for the 15-17 year old age group, reversing teen birth trends witnessed in the 1980s. The birth rate decreased by 20 percent for teens aged 15-19, from 62.1 births per 1,000 in 1991 to 49.6 in 1999. Moreover African American teens reflect the largest decrease in teen birth rates of any group (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has consistently fallen below the national average for teenage births (mothers under 20). In 1998, Massachusetts' birth rate was 28.6 per 1,000 women aged 15-19, compared to a national rate of 51.1 per 1,000 women (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000).

**Figure 1-8.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000

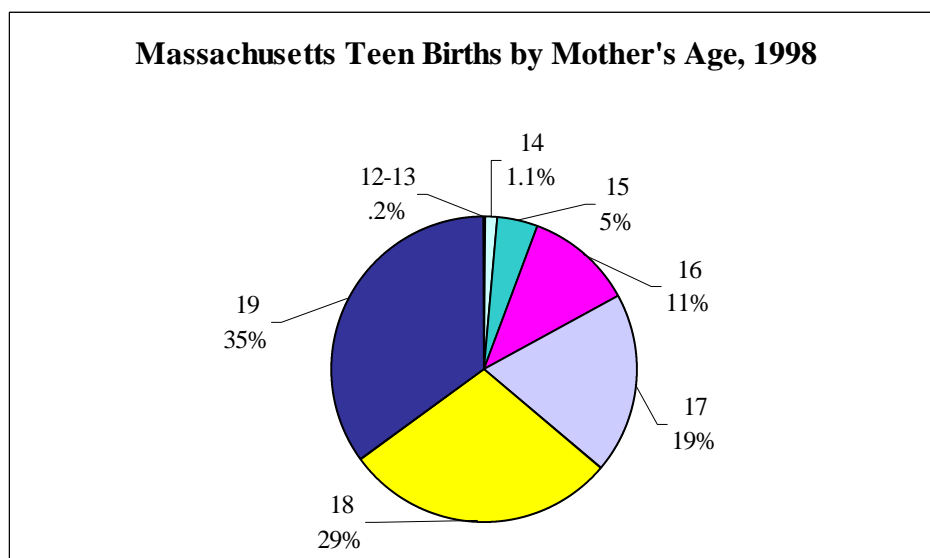
While the Massachusetts' overall teenage birth rate is below the national average, the following five Massachusetts communities had the highest teen birth rates in 1998 and all had birth rates higher than the national average: Holyoke (131.3 births per 1,000 Holyoke women ages 15-19 years), Chelsea (115.5), Lawrence (113.4), Springfield (84.1), and Southbridge (82.0). The

communities of Lynn (76.2), New Bedford (72.5), Lowell (65.8), Brockton (65.7), Fall River (56.4), Fitchburg (54.2) and Worcester (51.2) also had teen birth rates above the national average of 51.1.

In 1998, 5,902 babies were born to Massachusetts young women under the age of 20. Overall, the Commonwealth teenage births represent only 7.3 percent of the total state births, significantly below the national teen average of 12.3 percent (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000).

In 1998, teenage mothers aged 18-19 comprised 64 percent of all teenage births in the Commonwealth, followed by 35 percent of teenage births to mothers ages 15-17, and 1.3 percent to young women under the age of 15. In 1998, there were a total of 14 births for youth age 12-13; 336 births for youth age 14-15; 1,783 births to mothers age 16-17; and 3,769 births to young women age 18-19 (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000).

**Figure 1-9.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000

Fifty percent (50%) of 1998 Massachusetts teen births were to white, non-Hispanic mothers. While this represents a slight increase from the previous year (1%), this proportion has declined 3 percent since 1992. Between 1992-1998, the proportion of births to African American non-Hispanic teens declined by 3.2 percent. During the same period, Hispanic teen births increased 4 percent and Asian teen births increased .4 percent (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000).

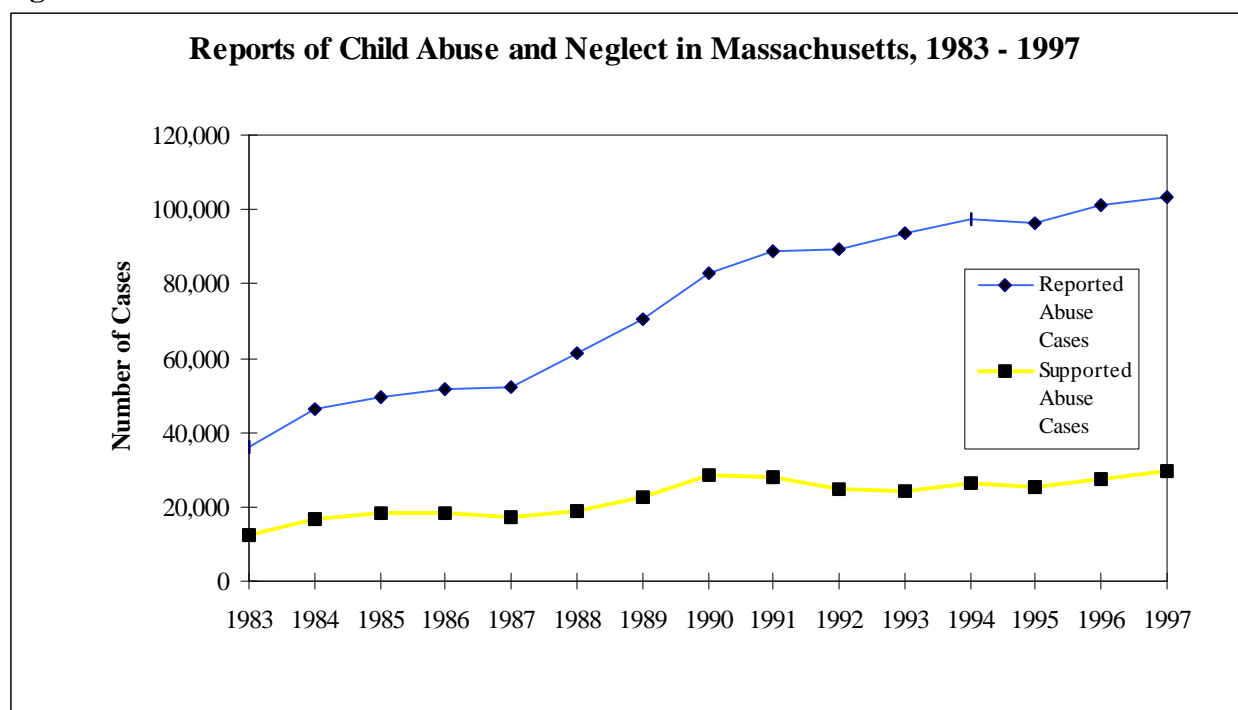
Approximately 69 percent of teen mothers' pre-natal care were supported with public funds, compared with 21 percent of women 20 and older. In 1998, 91 percent of teen mothers were unmarried, and this figure has basically remained stable since 1993. In cases where unmarried mothers acknowledged the paternity, 57 percent of the fathers were 20 years old or older. Teen mothers were 31 percent more likely to produce low birth rate babies than adult women (Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 2000).

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

The mission of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services (DSS) is to provide for the care and protection of youth who have been abused or neglected in a family setting. The Department of Social Services is responsible for investigating reports of child maltreatment, and is the recipient of reports of child abuse from both mandated and non-mandated reporters throughout the state. Mandated reporting groups include DSS social workers, law enforcement personnel, medical personnel, school personnel, and court personnel. Non-mandated reporters include self-reporting victims, relatives of the victim, and siblings. The DSS follows several procedures upon receiving a report of child abuse/neglect. Reports are screened in or out depending on all of the information presented regarding the case. Screened in cases are investigated by a DSS worker and, if found to be true, are upgraded to a supported case. The DSS classifies the abuse of children into four categories: neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

In 1997, the total number of abuse cases reported to DSS was 103,533, an increase of 2 percent over 1996. The number of supported abuse cases also increased in 1997, totaling 29,815, a 10 percent increase over 1996. 1997 witnessed the highest number of both reported and supported abuse cases since 1983.

**Figure 1-10.**



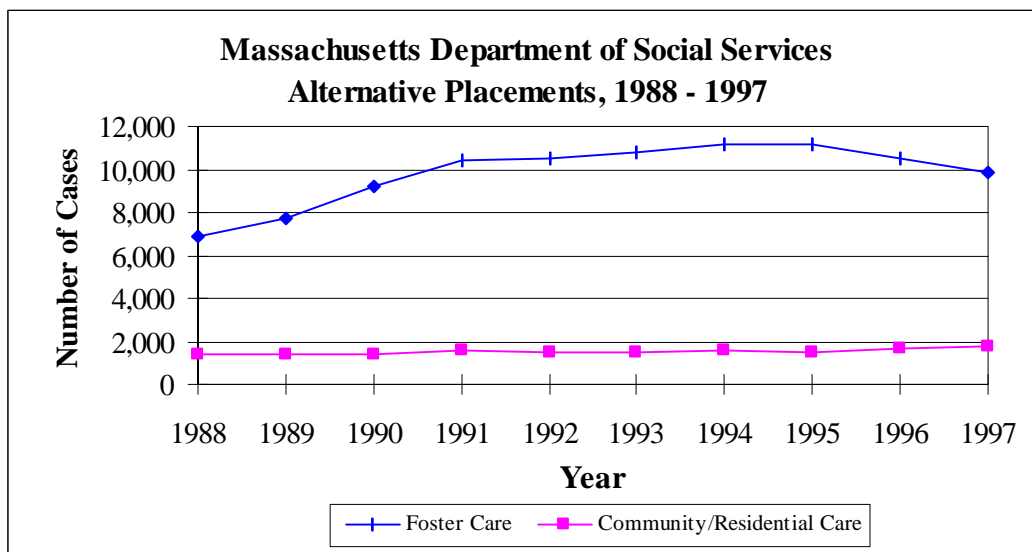
Source: Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999

Foster care services are provided for children who have been neglected, abandoned, or have experienced physical or sexual abuse, and are unable to live with their own families. For children who require a more structured setting than that provided by a foster care home, community or residential care is made available. Community programs provide a more structured setting, while enabling the child to attend school and programs in the local

community. Residential programs offer a higher level of structure by providing on-site schooling and programs (Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999).

Between the years 1988 and 1995, the number of children in foster care services increased from 6,861 to 11,196, an increase of 63 percent. However, by 1997, the number of children in foster care services declined to 9,831, which represents a 12 percent decrease over the 1995 figure. Between 1988 and 1997, the total number of children who required community or residential care services increased from 1,402 to 1,728, an increase of 23 percent (Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999).

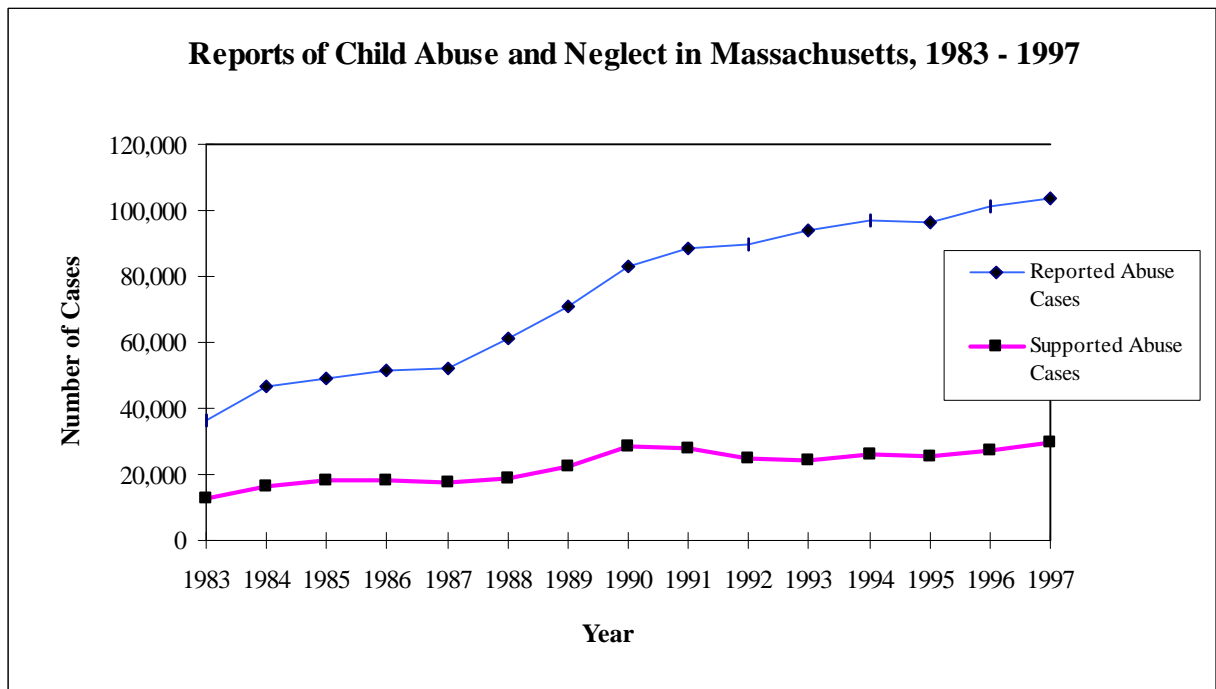
**Figure 1-11.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999

In 1996, there were 7,638 cases of reported child sexual abuse cases, representing a 5 percent increase from 1995. Supported child abuse cases totaled 1,415, a 7 percent decrease from the previous year (Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999).

**Figure 1-12.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Social Services, 1999

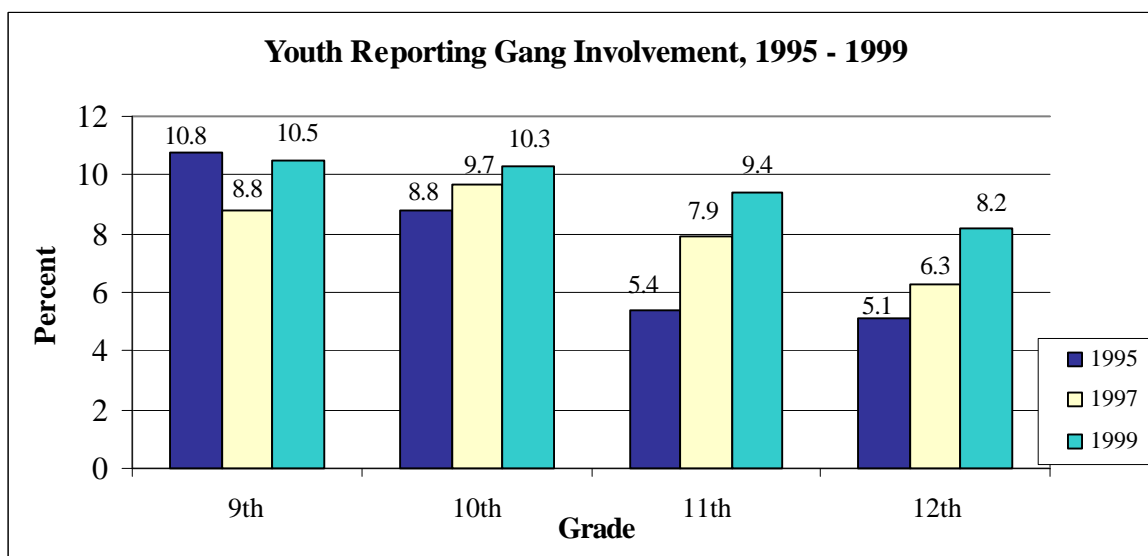
## GANG INVOLVEMENT

Violence-related behavior in the community and at school endangers the health and safety of all young people. According to the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS), in the 30 days prior to the survey, 6 percent of all high school students did not attend school on at least one school day because they felt unsafe in school or on the way to or from school. Over one third (37%) of youth had been in a physical fight, and one student in seven (14%) had been in a fight on school property (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, one in ten youth (10%) reported gang involvement (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000). Youth who reported gang involvement were more likely, than non-gang involved youth, to engage in such high risk behaviors as carrying a weapon, and marijuana and alcohol use. Male high school students were twice as likely to report gang involvement (13.3%) than female students (6.0%).

Gang participation by 9<sup>th</sup> grade students decreased between 1995 and 1997 (10.8% to 8.8%), however, involvement increased again in 1999, to 10.5 percent. Also, gang involvement increased for all upper grade levels, with students in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade reflecting the largest increase. Tenth-grade youth involved in gangs increased from 8.8% in 1995 to 10.3% in 1999; 11<sup>th</sup> grade students' gang involvement increased from 5.4% in 1995 to 9.4% in 1999; and 12<sup>th</sup> grade participation increased from 5.1% in 1995 to 8.2% in 1999 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-13.**

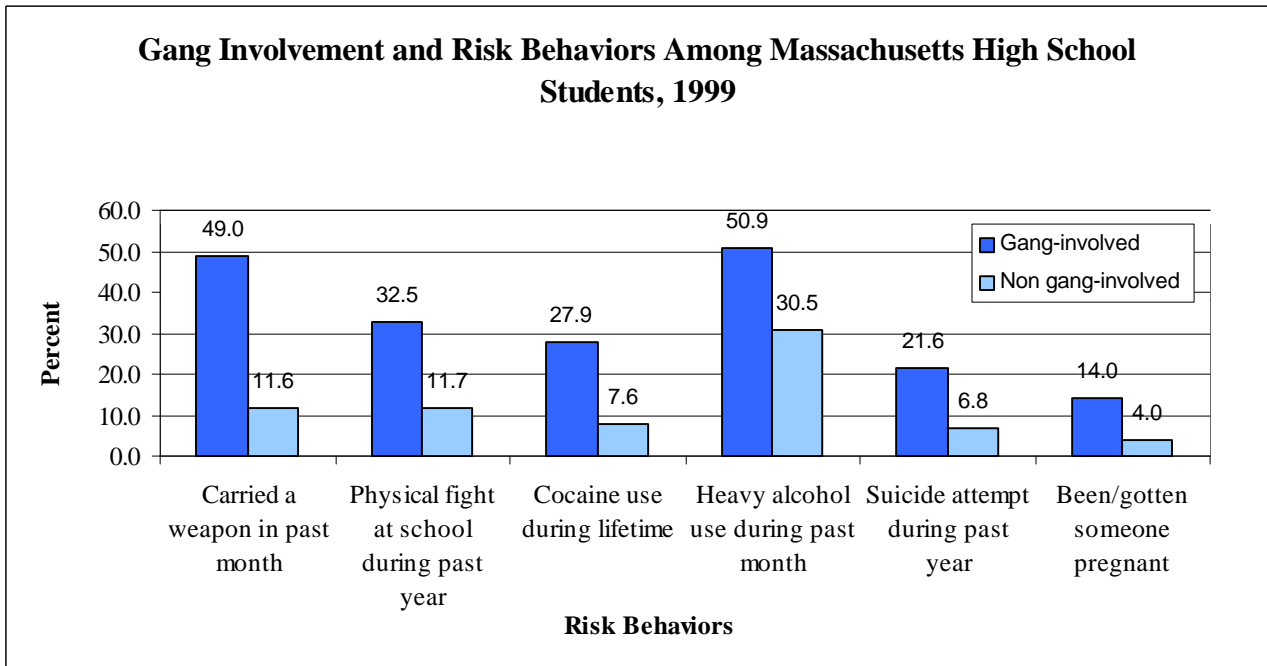


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Students who were involved in gangs were more likely than others to report high rates of both violence-related behaviors and other risk behaviors such as: carrying a weapon, fighting, drug and alcohol use, attempting suicide, and becoming pregnant or have gotten someone pregnant. Of youth who are gang-involved, 49 percent report carrying a weapon in the past month, compared to 11.6 percent of youth who are not gang-involved. Gang-involved youth were four

times as likely (28%), as other youth (7%), to report cocaine use. Further, gang-involved youth were more than one and a half times as likely to engage in heavy alcohol use in the past month (51%), compared to youth not involved with a gang (31%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-14.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

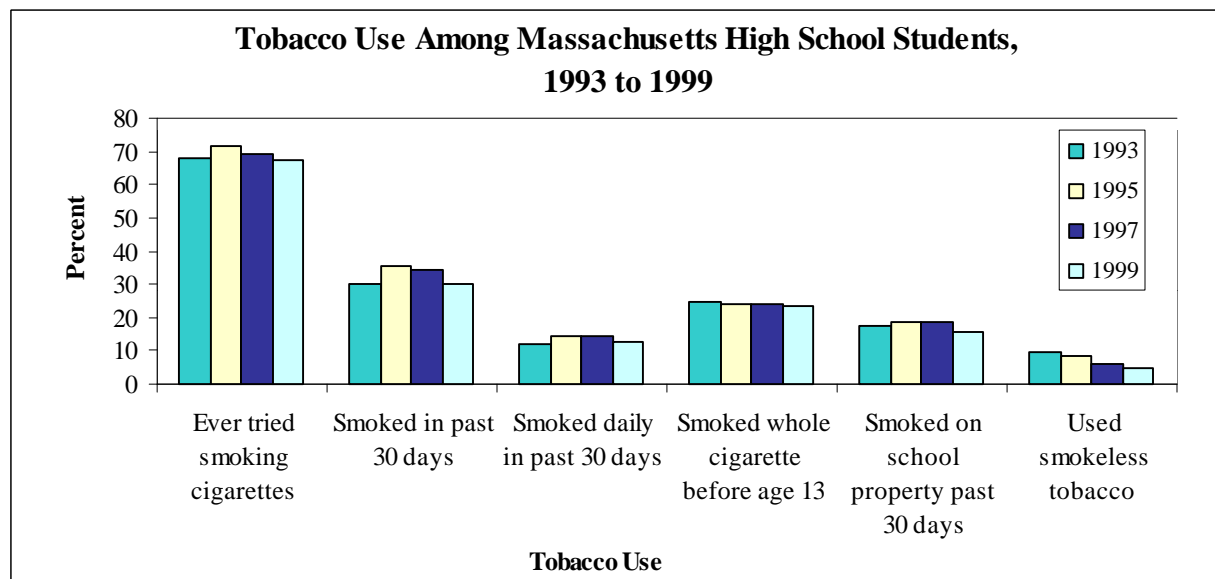
## YOUTH DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS), there has been a reported increase in alcohol use among Massachusetts' high school students and a leveling off or slight decrease in drug and tobacco use.

### ***Tobacco Use***

The 1999 MYRBS found that over two-thirds of high school students (67%) have tried smoking cigarettes and almost one quarter (23%) had smoked at least one whole cigarette before age 13. Further, students who smoked before the age of 13 were significantly more likely to report regular smoking. The MYRBS indicates the percentage of students that reported smoking recently, which increased between 1993 and 1995, has substantially declined in 1999. Recent cigarette smoking increased from 30 percent of students in 1993 to 37 percent in 1995, decreasing slightly to 34 percent in 1997, and further decreasing to 30 percent in 1999. Furthermore, between 1995 to 1999, recent cigarette smoking declined for both male (35% to 30%) and female (36% to 31%) students. The study also found that students who reported smoking tobacco in the month prior to the survey were more likely to report using alcohol and marijuana in the past 30 days, and experimenting with cocaine. Students reporting daily smoking declined slightly between 1997 and 1999 (15% to 13%). Students reporting using smokeless tobacco has dramatically declined from 9.4 percent in 1993 to 4.9 in 1999 (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-15.**



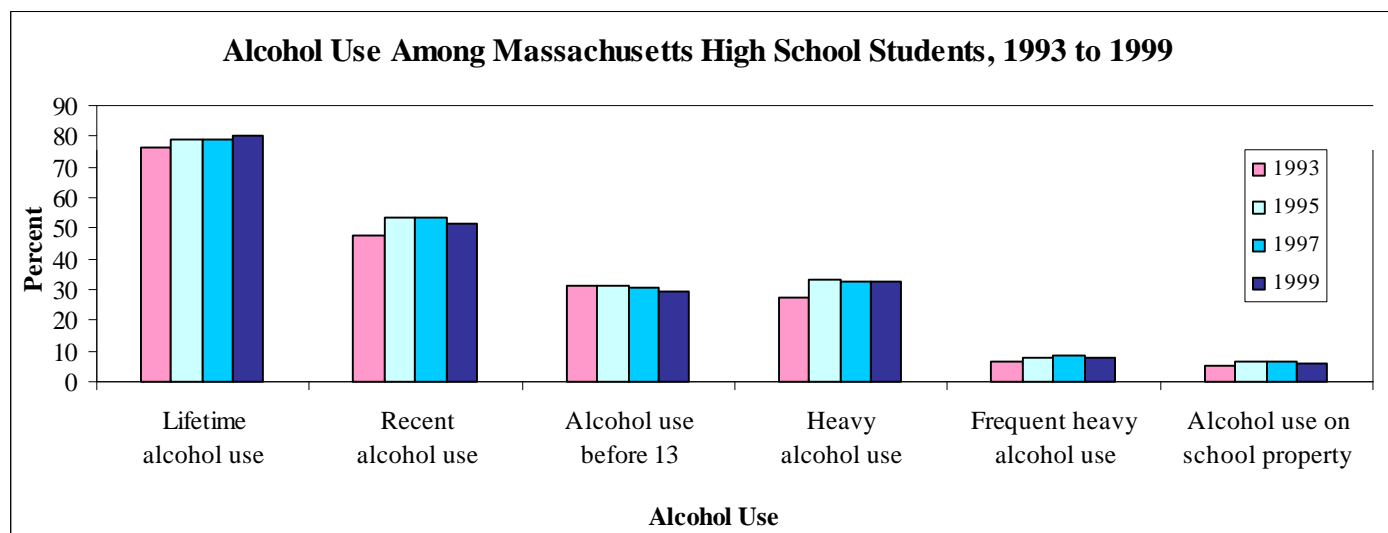
Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

### ***Alcohol Use***

The 1999 MYRBS found that 80 percent of Massachusetts' high school students reported having had a drink of alcohol in their lifetime, a slight increase from 1997 (79%). There was no measurable difference in alcohol use between male (81%) and female (80%) students. Thirty percent (30%) of students surveyed reported drinking alcohol before the age of 13. Additionally,

students who reported using alcohol before age 13 were more likely to report recent alcohol use (75% vs. 47%), heavy alcohol use (50% vs. 29%), and alcohol use on school property (13% vs. 4%). Six percent (6%) of all students report drinking alcohol on school property. In the 30 days prior to the survey, over one half of Massachusetts' high school students reported having at least one drink of alcohol (52%), one third participated in binge drinking (33%), and 8 percent acknowledged engaging in frequent binge drinking (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

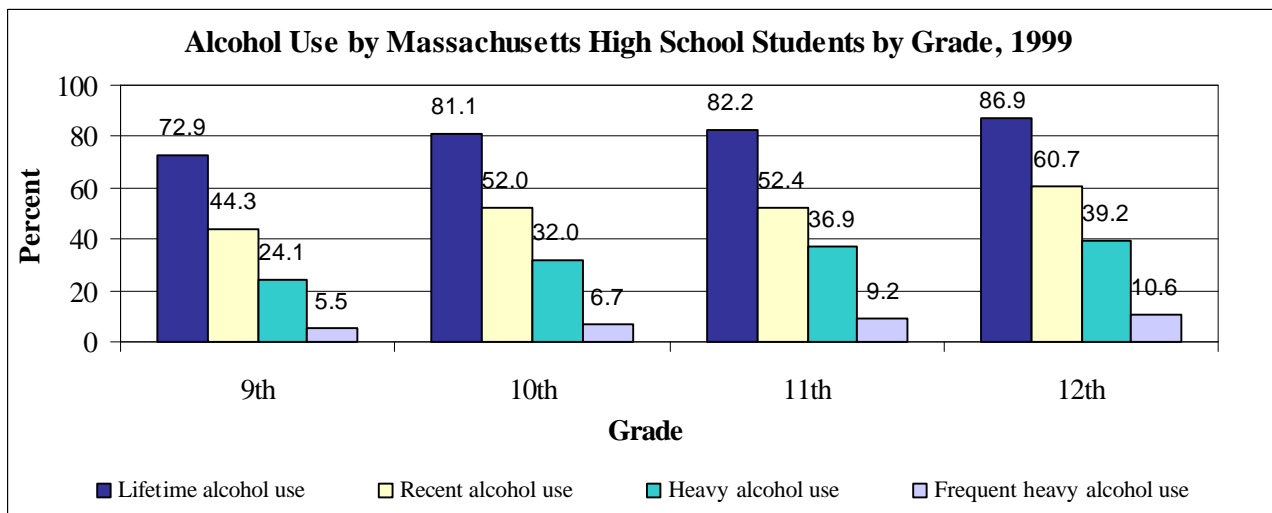
**Figure 1-16.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Students reporting lifetime alcohol use escalated from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (73% to 87%), with the biggest increase occurring between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades. First year high school students were the least likely of all high school students to report recent alcohol consumption (44%); however, by the second year of high school, over half of all students (52%) reported having consumed alcohol at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey. There was a more gradual increase in recent alcohol use from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. By grade 12, 60% of students report alcohol use. Similarly, heavy drinking is commensurate with age (and grade). Almost one student in four (24%), first year high school students reported participating in heavy drinking. The rate rose to 39 percent among high school seniors (Massachusetts, Department of Education, 2000).

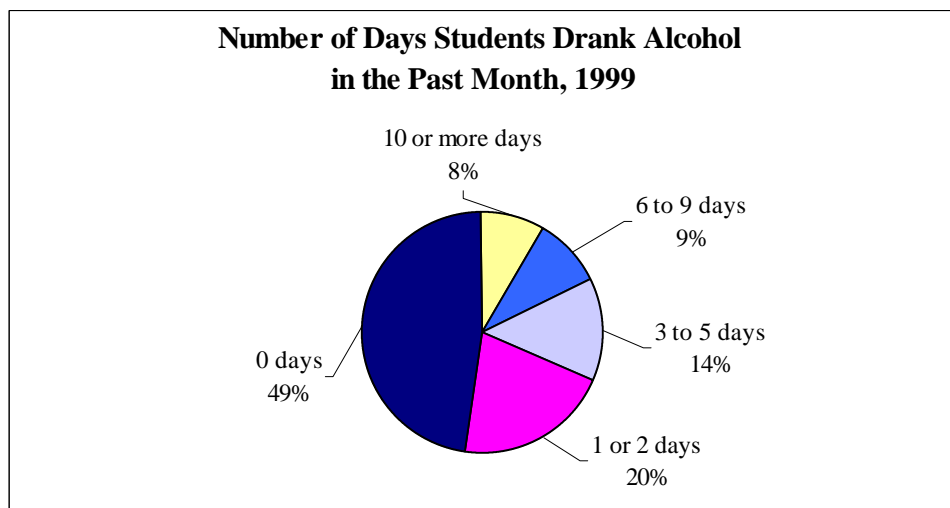
**Figure 1-17.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Over half of all Massachusetts high school students surveyed (52%) consumed at least one alcoholic drink in the 30 days prior to the survey, of which, approximately 8 percent reported using alcohol 10 or more days in the previous month (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-18.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

The MYRBS links recent alcohol consumption to other high risk behaviors including: drinking and driving, tobacco use, illegal drug use, physical violence, suicide attempts, and unprotected sexual intercourse. Students who reported *recent* alcohol use were more than twice as likely to report carrying a weapon in the past 30 days. Furthermore, they were almost twice as likely to have been in a physical fight in the past year, and twice as likely to have attempted suicide in the past year. For female students, a significant correlation was found between recent alcohol use and dating violence and unwanted sexual contact. Female students who reported alcohol use in the previous month, compared to those who did not recently use alcohol, were more likely to

report violence by a date (26% vs. 10%) and to have experienced sexual contact against their will (22% vs. 14%).

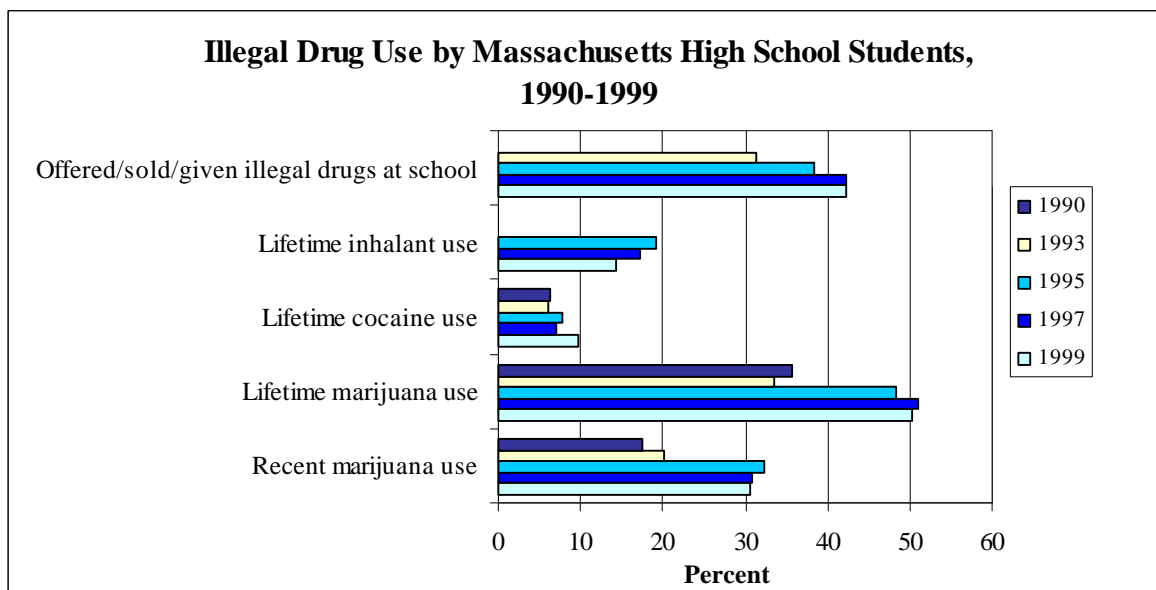
The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (1998) states that 85 percent of their July 1, 1998, population reported using alcohol prior to commitment. Over one-third of the population (36%) reported consuming alcohol at least once per week.

### **Drug Use**

According to the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, “almost half of all Massachusetts high school students (47%) have never used any illegal drug and 72% have never used any illegal drug other than marijuana” (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000, p. 25). Survey results indicate marijuana appears to be a stepping-stone to other illicit drugs. The majority of youth (93%) who used other illegal drugs also acknowledged having used marijuana. Youth who reported illegal drug use were also more likely than those who had never used drugs to carry a weapon, experience dating violence, attempted suicide, and engage in high-risk sexual behaviors.

Half of all Massachusetts high school students surveyed (50%) have used marijuana at least once during their lifetime. The rates of lifetime marijuana use among students have increased steadily from 1993 (34%) to 1995 (48%) to 1997 (51%), and slightly declined in 1999 (50%). Thirty-one percent (31%) of students reported marijuana use in the 30 days prior to the survey, remaining unchanged from 1997. Almost one student in five (19%) reported inhalant use at least once (e.g., inhaled glue, aerosol sprays or paint fumes in order to get high) in 1995. There was a significant decrease in 1999, with one in seven (14%) high school students reporting inhalant use at least once. Over one-third of high school students (36%) were *sold*, *offered*, or *given* an illegal drug on school property during the year prior to the survey (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

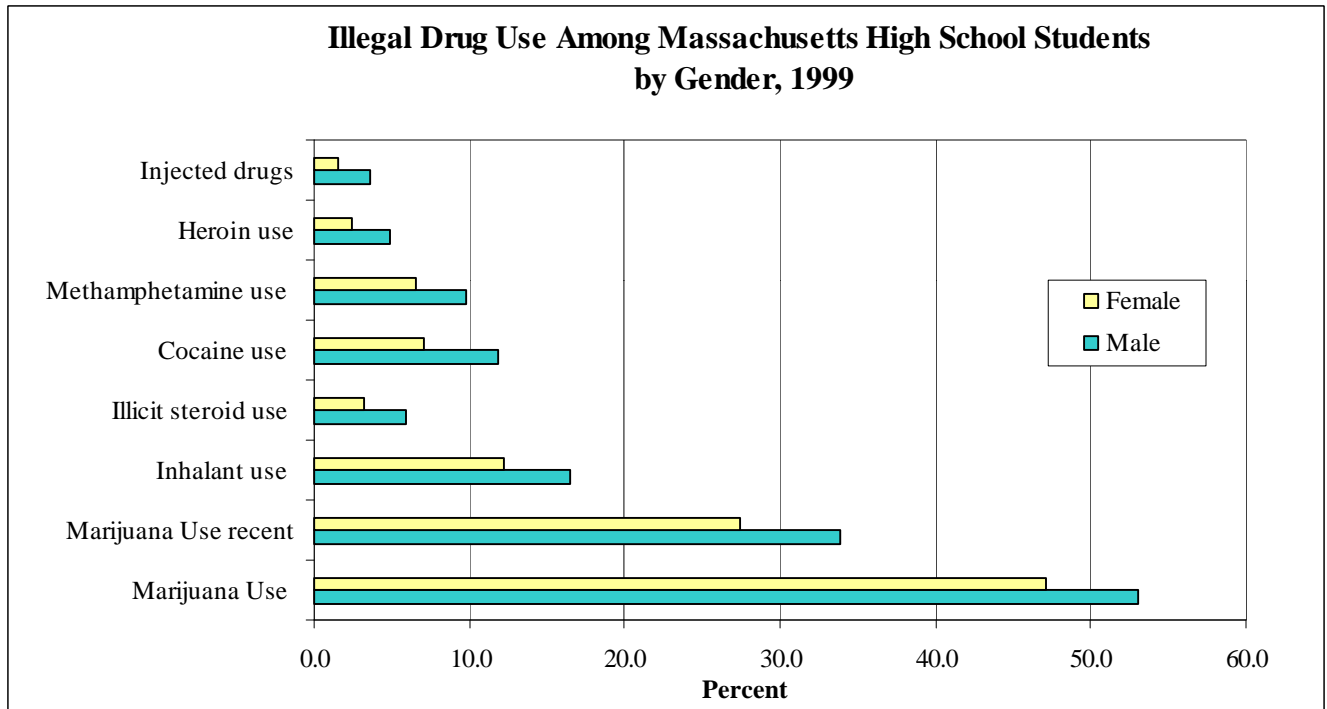
**Figure 1-19.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

Compared to female high school students, males had a significantly higher rate of lifetime cocaine use (12% to 7%), and inhalant use (17% to 12%). Use of marijuana one or more times among female students was slightly lower in 1999 (47%) than in 1997 (50%), however, it remains significantly higher than it had been in 1995 (42%) or 1993 (29%). According to the MYRBS, initial use of marijuana occurred at ages 13 and 14; with one in eight (13%) high school students reporting having had used marijuana before age 13, representing a significant increase since 1993 (7%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-20.**

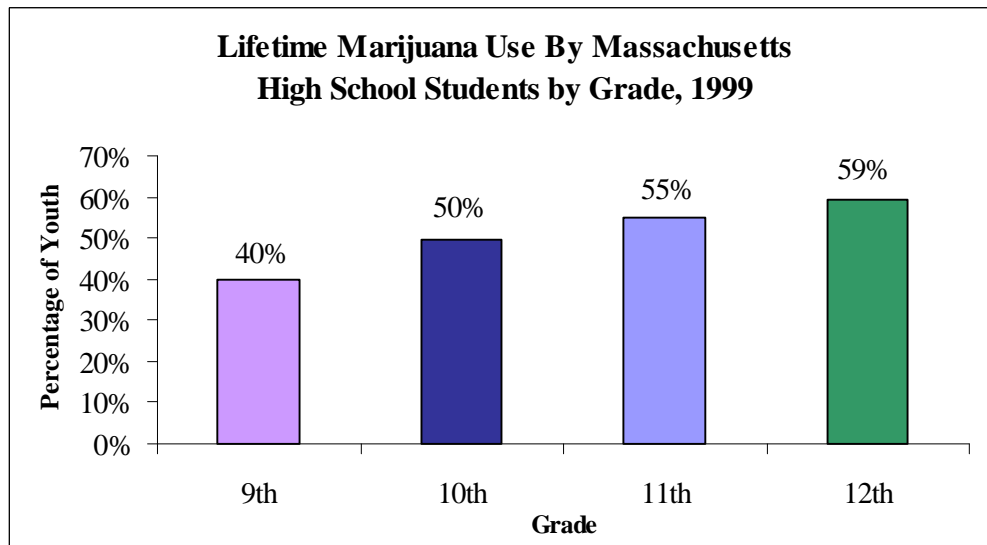


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

In 1999, lifetime use of marijuana slightly declined for white students (52%) from the 1997 rate (53%), and dramatically decreased for African American students (50% compared to 65%). However, lifetime use of marijuana increased from 1997 to 1999 for Hispanic students (43% to 46%), Asian (21% to 31%), and "Other" (52% to 62%).

Lifetime use of marijuana also rose with grade level; 12<sup>th</sup> grade students had higher rates (59%) of marijuana use than 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (40%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

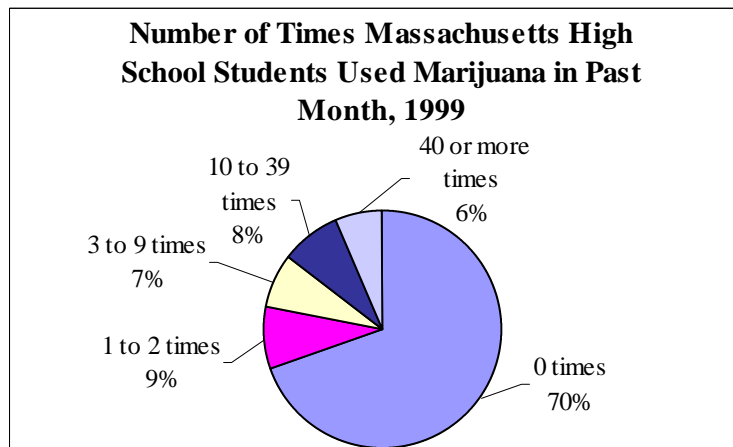
**Figure 1-21.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

In 1999, 14 percent of all students used marijuana ten or more times in the 30 days preceding the survey, and one student in twenty (6%) used marijuana forty or more times (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-22.**



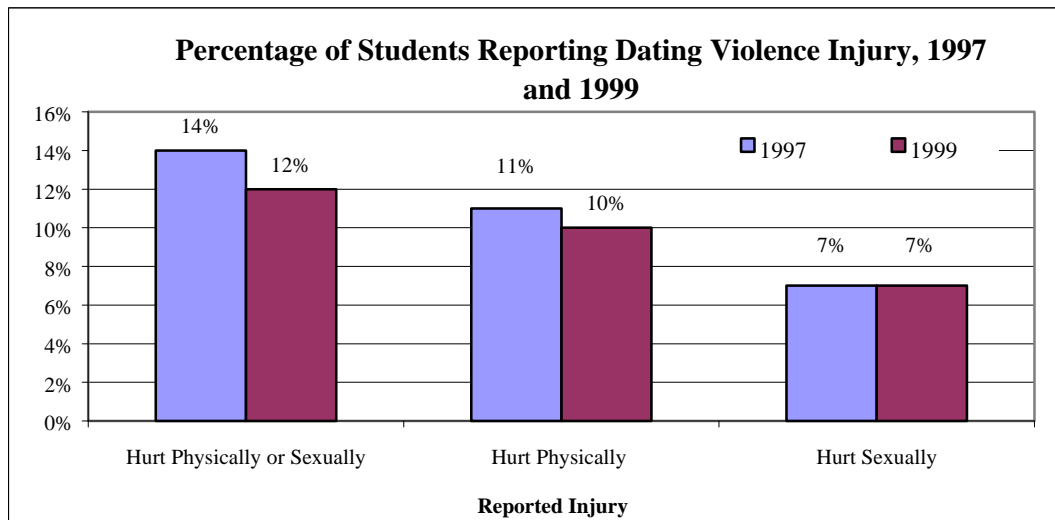
Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services (1998) states that nearly 90 percent of their July 1, 1998, population reported some use of marijuana prior to commitment. Over sixty percent (60%) of the DYS population reported using marijuana at least once per week, of which 26 percent admitted to daily use of marijuana. One youth in twenty (5%) reported using cocaine at least one time per week prior to commitment, while 2 percent reported weekly crack cocaine use.

## TEEN DATING VIOLENCE

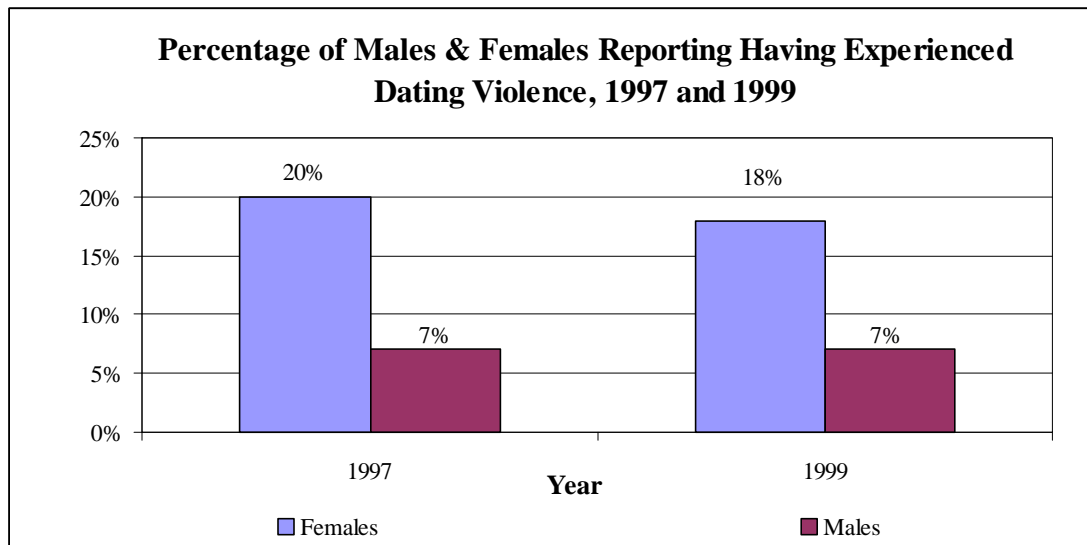
According to the 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS) one of every eight students (12%) reported being physically or sexually hurt by someone they were dating. Females reported dating violence (18%) at a higher frequency than their male counterparts (7%) (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

**Figure 1-23.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998, 2000

**Figure 1-24.**

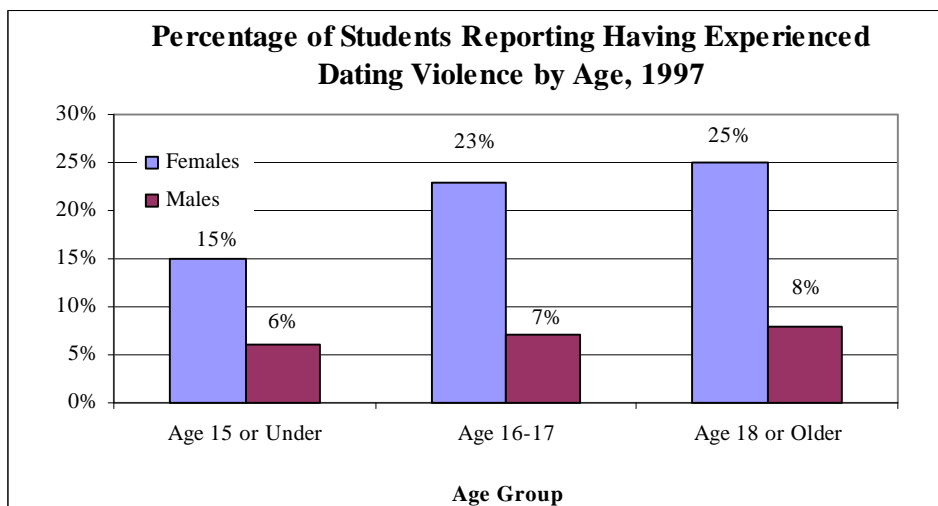


Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998, 2000

It appears that the incidence of dating violence increases as young people grow older. Twenty-five (25) percent of girls ages 18 and older reported being hurt by a date, compared to 15% of girls aged 15 and under (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998). This trend can also be

seen among the male population. These progressive increases may reflect the age at which young people begin to date.

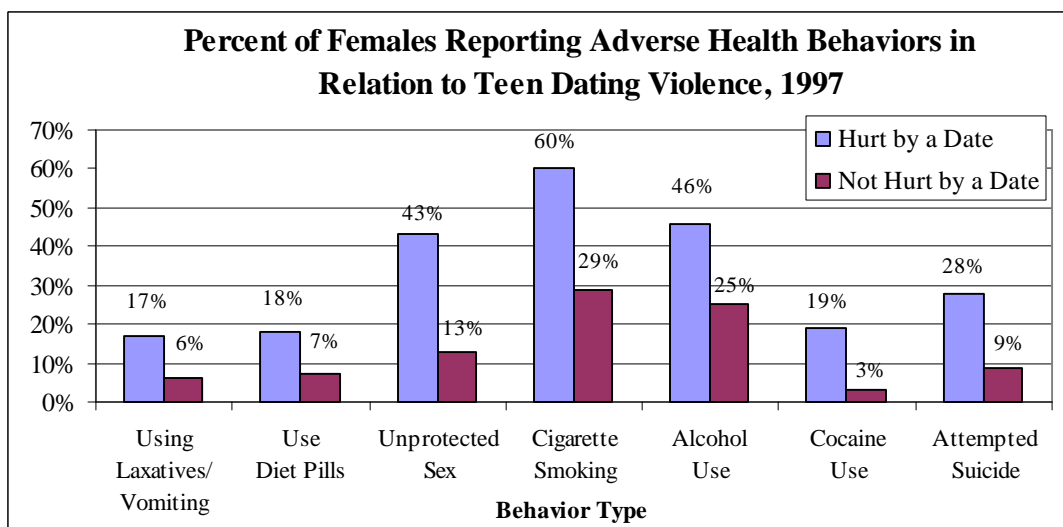
**Figure 1-25.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998

As with adults, dating violence is often a very traumatizing experience. Considering the obstacles adult victims face in obtaining help to remove themselves from an abusive environment, teenage victims have an equally difficult time resolving their feelings about the abuse and successfully reaching out for help. Consequently, dating violence was found to be related to several other adverse behaviors including drug and alcohol use, eating disorders, suicidal tendencies, and engaging in unprotected sexual intercourse. When compared to the population reporting no previous dating violence, those having experienced past dating violence reported higher incidences of the mentioned adverse health behaviors (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998).

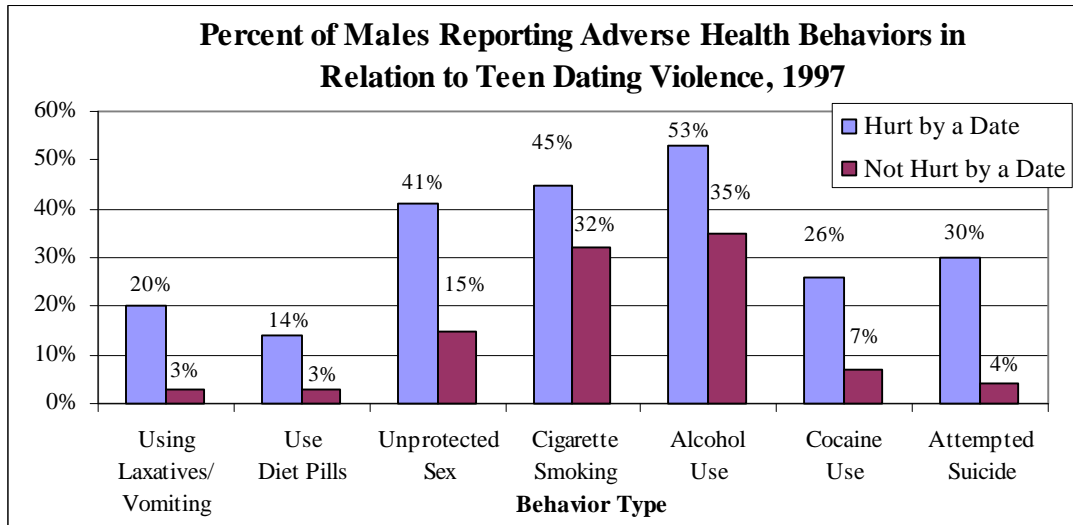
**Figure 1-26.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998.

Young women who have been hurt by a date were almost twice as likely to report consuming five or more drinks during the past month compared to those who had not experienced dating violence. With respect to drug use, abused females were six times more likely to use cocaine in their lifetime compared to the non-abused group. This is reflected in the male group also, where cocaine use was four times as likely to be used by young men reporting dating violence (Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998).

**Figure 1-27.**



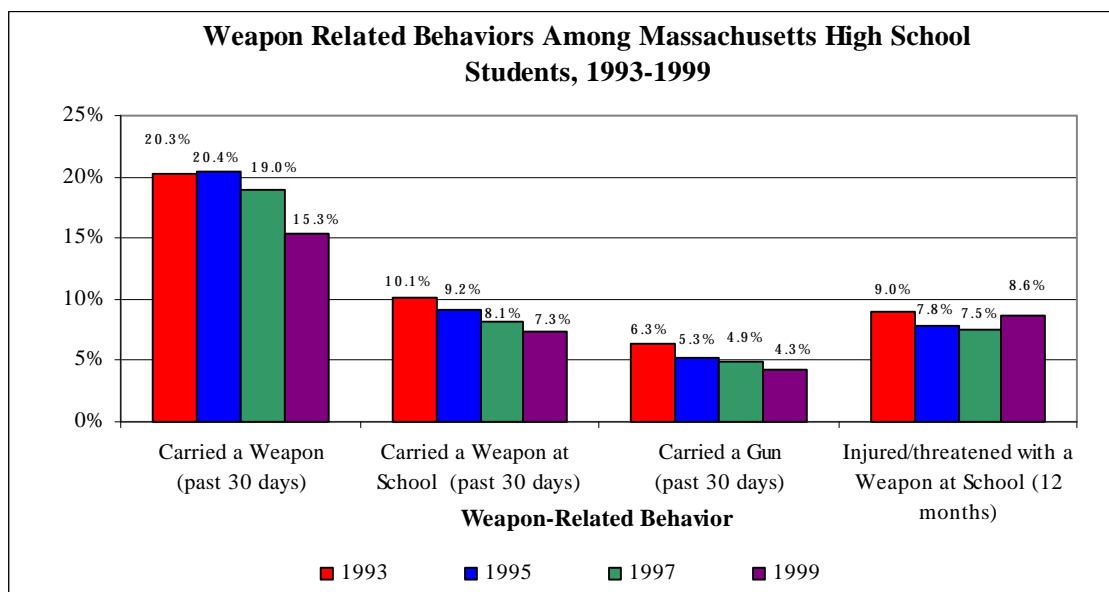
Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 1998.

## WEAPONS

### *Weapon-Related Behaviors*

The 1999 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000) surveyed high school students on the incidence of violence within and outside of the school environment. Overall, rates of weapon carrying have declined significantly from 1993 to 1999. Of the four reported weapon related behaviors (e.g., carrying a weapon, carrying a weapon inside of school, and carrying a gun), three have continued to decline over the past seven years. According to the Massachusetts Department of Education (2000, p. 32) “rates of weapon carrying in the past month dropped significantly from 19% in 1997 to 15% in 1999.” However, in 1999 one in twelve students (9%) reported being injured and/or threatened with a weapon within the past 12 months, an increase from 1997 to just below the 1993 figure.

**Figure 1-28.**



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000

According to the 1999 MYRBS, males were significantly more likely to report carrying a weapon than their female counterparts, 24% and 6% respectively. This gender difference was also noted with respect to carrying a weapon on school property, 11% of males compared to 3% females (Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000).

